

# Three Rivers Inc.

## Access to Independent Living

M A Y 2 0 0 9

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Director's Note
- Living Well Program
- New Staff
- Disability Awareness in India
- H.O.M.E.
- Medical Equipment Loan Program
- Committee Updates

President Obama and Vice President Biden released within the first hours of taking their oath's office a new policy agenda for people living with disabilities.

**1. Provide individuals with disabilities with the educational opportunities.**

Obama and Biden will also authorize a comprehensive study of students with disabilities and issues relating to transition to work and higher education.

**2. End discrimination by restoring the Americans with Disabilities**

**Act**, increasing funding for enforcement, supporting the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.

**3. Increase the employment rate of workers with disabilities** by effectively implementing regulations that require the federal government and its contractors to employ people with disabilities.

**4. Support independent, community-based living for Americans with disabilities by enforcing the Community Choice**

**Act**, and streamline the Social Security approval process.

For the administration's full statement you can visit:

[www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/disabilities](http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/disabilities)

HOWEVER, as of Monday, April 27th, 2009, the President has failed to fully support this agenda. Today, Disability Advocates are outside the White House protesting President Obama's failure to push through the Community Choice Act (CCA) that he sponsored as a senator. The CCC upholds an individual's right to choose Home and Community Based Services as an alternative to nursing home care. We, as advocates need to remind President Obama of how important this legislation is. It should not be a part of a healthcare reform package. It should stand alone as a basic right for individuals.

AND, we as advocates have to do a better job at educating people. A quick view of bloggers on the ABC News page covering the Whitehouse protest makes this abundantly clear. The uneducated public is viewing the Choice Act as a "hand out"; clearly not understanding that we are asking only for options. Forcing people into nursing homes makes as much sense as forcing people to receive care in an emergency room instead of allowing them to visit their personal physician. It's our duty to educate and advocate—let's get moving!- Audrey S. Philip

# Director's Note

**Three Rivers  
helps people  
with all  
disabilities of  
all ages.**

I'm sure that all of you are as focused on the economic problems of our country and the world as we are here at Three Rivers. Locally, we have only just begun to see the effects of this economic downturn and it is hard for us to know how or when it will end. What we do know is that stress complicates our lives and affects our physical well-being. I encourage everyone to take time to focus on the simple things that make our lives good; take time to talk friends and family, share information with your children but in a clear and positive manner, visit your local library, not only are books free, they always have lists of free community activities. If you aren't able to get to the library, you can request that books be sent to you. Focusing on the positive won't solve all your problems but it can improve your health. When you truly do need additional help, reach out to Three Rivers staff or other community supports. We are here to help.

*Audrey Schremmer-Philip, Executive Director*

[www.facebook.com/pages/Three-Rivers-Inc/41361963231](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Three-Rivers-Inc/41361963231)

## CONTACT US

### Wamego Office 785-456-9915

**Toll free 800-555-3994**

**Audrey Schremmer-Philip**, Executive Director

**Cindy Diederich**, Business Manager

Finance Dept:

**Jean, Chris, Karen and Deanna**

**Becky** - Independent Living Specialist

**Kerri** - Office Coordinator

**Calista** - Receptionist

**Wendy** - Independent Living Counselor

**Angie** - Personal Attendant Liaison

**Stacie** - Community Outreach Specialist

### Seneca Office

**785-336-0222**

**Lynn** - Independent Living/TBI Coordinator

**Deb** - Independent Living Counselor

**Molly** - Independent Living Specialist

**Mike** - Receptionist

### Manhattan Office

**785-537-8985**

**Toll free 877-714-7272**

**Lori** - Independent Living Counselor

**Rhonda** - Independent Living Counselor

**Theresa** - Independent Living Specialist

**Kristen** - Independent Living Specialist

### Clay Center Office

**785-632-6117**

**Toll free 877-714-7273**

**Rose** - Physical Disability Waiver Coordinator

**Keyna** - Independent Living Specialist

**Becky** - Receptionist

### Topeka Office 785-273-0249

**Janet** - Independent Living Counselor

### PBPN Office 785-966-8344

**Jeanie** - Independent Living Specialist

reception@threeriversinc.org

# New Living Well Program PAGE 3

Living Well is an established 8 week (or monthly) curriculum promoting a healthy lifestyle for anyone living with a long term health condition. The program focuses on nutritional options, exercise and fitness, setting achievable goals, use of community resources, and making healthy lifestyle changes.

Over 1,000 individuals in 32 states have completed the Living Well Workshop. Participants who have completed the program reported a 37% decrease in limitation due to secondary health conditions, and a significant decrease in depression levels. Individuals with a long term health problem, compose about 20% of the population, but account for almost half of all medical expenditures. In a study funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, researchers at the University of Montana and the University of Kansas found that graduates of the Living Well Program reduced their annual medical expenses by 10%, and maintained the reduction over a 5 year period. For more information on a Living Well Program in your area, please contact Three Rivers Inc at (800) 555-3994.

## Advocacy Alert

SRS can't bleed anymore! This is the message that we need to send to our legislators and the public. SRS has been asked to cut more services and we need to educate everyone that they have been cut enough. Cutting SRS services has a direct impact on the neediest individuals in our state. SRS already has growing waiting lists for services; SRS employee hiring freeze means that fewer staff is processing ever increasing claims. People are waiting months to receive services and this is unacceptable. We understand budget cuts, but this isn't the place to be making deeper cuts.

## What's Happening....

We're not even half way thru 2009 but for Three Rivers and many others, its time to wrap up our fiscal year and develop budgets for FY 2010 which begins July 1, 2009. We're always looking ahead! Three Rivers held its quarterly all staff meeting on April 23 to catch up on news around our service area and work in some staff training. While our staff have been working hard on their normal duties we are keeping focused on the fiscal problems at the state level. The rolling wait list for the PD Waiver and state budget plans for FY 2010 remain a priority focus. Community Outreach is going great, but we are always looking for more ways to share our message. If you would like to visit with the outreach department, please email [stacie@threeriversinc.org](mailto:stacie@threeriversinc.org) or call Stacie at 785-456-9915 ext 122.

## New Staff

Three Rivers is proud to introduce new staff and staff on the move! Kerri, our new office coordinator, started in February. She had previously been the Assistant for Deanna began as the new accountant in the IL staff since December 2007. She is working out of the Seneca and Wamego offices.

## Staff on the Move

In addition to the new faces, Molly became the new Independent Living Specialist. She had previously been the Assistant for Deanna began as the new accountant in the IL staff since December 2007. She is working out of the Seneca and Wamego offices.



## Taking Disability Awareness to India!

By Kristin Hymer, ILS, Manhattan office

Supporting individuals with disabilities in America is an honor. Serving people with disabilities in India was an honor and a life changing adventure. I traveled with Joy Mall, Disability Awareness Specialist and wheelchair user, on her 9<sup>th</sup> disability education trip to India. Joy is an independent woman in America but due to discrimination and limited education regarding disability, Joy needs a personal assistant to make her travels manageable throughout the country of India. We traveled through Bangalore, Hubli, Varanasi and New Delhi educating and

training community leaders and the disabled about right and responsibilities of disability awareness.

Our travels began in Bangalore where we worked with *Joni and Friends Wheels for the World* to supply 150 wheelchairs/walkers/canes to urban and rural residents of Bangalore. Some villagers drove over four hours to get a wheelchair! Individuals seeking adaptive equipment came crawling, dragging, or lifting their limbs to make it to the registration tables. Many children were carried by parents or family members. Most had no education about what disability they have or how to overcome the barriers of the society and the negative attitude toward people with disabilities. Joy counseled on wheelchair use and how to decrease negative thoughts regarding personal disability. My favorite part of Bangalore was the excitement of the children after receiving their personal wheelchair or walker; for the first time they were independent!

Our next stop was Hubli (southeast India) where we distributed another 50 wheelchairs to villagers and local residence of Hubli. For the next two weeks, we helped organize disability awareness meetings with local leaders and community organizers. I assisted by preparing slideshows and outlines to educate and encourage those with disabilities and supporters of disability awareness. While in Hubli I worked with *Operation Equip India* (OEI), an organization dedicated to equipping India's disabled with the physical, educational and socio-economic tools necessary for a life of independence and advancement. Young women of OEI work in the crafts department learning elaborate stitching and the art of handicraft. OEI pays for the education of young men in the school system so that they are able to compete for jobs within their communities. OEI also supports these young adults by paying for reconstructive surgery and physical therapy! Most of the students would never be able to afford education nor surgery or therapy; the students are truly blessed by supporters of OEI. I was inspired to see the drive and focus of the staff and students at OEI, they are a patient, loving, joyful group of individuals who are truly grateful for every provision in their lives.

Our third stop, Varanasi is Joy's hometown. As a child, Joy gained accessibility by lying on the seat of a tricycle and using her hands to move the tricycle's peddles. During our week and a half in Varanasi we met with local leaders of the community who desired to be involved with disability awareness. Joy led a woman's retreat where she shared her story of growing up in India with a disability and the joy she currently experiences by choosing to be patient with herself and others. Joy often spoke about her attitude as a choice. Her speeches encouraged listeners to take responsibility for how they understand themselves and others with or without a disability. Each place we traveled offered additional opportunities to share the hope that can come with a disability and the vision of acceptance and inclusion for people with disabilities in India.

New Delhi was our final stop. Joy and I had a great turn of events which led to Joy speaking at the *India Spinal Cord Injury Center* (previously not on our list of speaking engagements). The crowd was filled with those who recently lost ability of their arms and/or legs. Joy offered the vision that being disabled is not the end of ones life but an opportunity to use the many other skills we have each been given. Joy spoke about the importance of kindness for family members and caregivers who spend much of their time serving. Joy reminded the crowd that all people, not just those with physical disabilities, have a disability of some sort that holds them back in life. She would often state that we are all “disabled” in some way and how being negative comes from comparing ourselves with others. No person is free from struggles or from feeling weak or helpless at one time or another. Through her personal experience Joy was able to bring many of the crowd members to tears. Many people thanked her for her experience and vision for the disabled.

I was blessed throughout the entire trip and will be excited to assist Joy a year from now for a national conference on disability awareness in which Joy will be the main speaker.

~ *Kristin*

kristin@threeriversinc.org

[http://www.joniandfriends.org/pg\\_wheelchair.php](http://www.joniandfriends.org/pg_wheelchair.php)

<http://equipindia.org/>

## **The H.O.M.E. Program**

Our H.O.M.E. Program provides professional, affordable care in your home.

Thinking about moving into a nursing home? Are you caring for an elderly parent?

This program may provide the relief you need. HOME attendant care services are individually tailored to meet your needs and may include house and yard work, meal preparation, personal hygiene, running errands, respite care and other non-medical services. HOME services can also provide temporary assistance for individuals recuperating after medical procedures such as knee surgery or a hip replacement.

Call us today!

## **Medical Equipment Loan Program**

Our Medical Equipment Loan Program collects donated medical equipment and provides it free of charge to anyone in need for as long as they need it. Our revolving inventory varies and depends on donations, but can include walkers, wheelchairs, canes, hospital beds, shower chairs and more. If you have medical equipment that is not being used and would like to donate it, please let us know. We are here to help!

**Spread the  
word....**

**Three Rivers  
has a lot to  
offer!**

## Committee Updates

The **Transportation Committee** has met several times at Three Rivers Inc. Representatives have also met with Pottawatomie County Commissioners each month. The goal for the committee is to increase the availability of public transportation in Pottawatomie County and the other counties in the service area of Three Rivers. Stacie Eichem, Community Outreach Specialist for Three Rivers, and Audrey Schremmer-Philip, Executive Director for Three Rivers, have also met with the Executive Director for ATA Bus in Manhattan to explore opportunities for collaboration and assistance. That meeting prompted ATA Bus and Pottawatomie County Commissioners to meet and discuss future collaboration. Since ATA Bus is a joint venture between the city of Manhattan and Riley County there are still many issues to discuss. Our committee is hopeful that we will someday soon have a concrete plan to connect these two systems.

In the meantime, the committee learned that there is a great need for education about the Pottawatomie County Transportation system. It is General Public Transportation and is open to everyone in Pottawatomie County. As part of the committees review process, it was noted that current transportation delivery methods did not meet our communities' needs. The Pott County transit has adopted new deviated fixed routes. This should provide residents the ability to plan their trips more easily. Pott County Transportation also has a new TOLL-FREE NUMBER that goes directly to a county office. This number replaces the all the old dispatch numbers. The schedule for the bus is available on the county's website [www.pottcounty.org](http://www.pottcounty.org) under the transportation button at the bottom of the screen. Pottawatomie County Transportation is also working with Three Rivers to research available funding sources.

**For more information about Pott County Transportation call  
1-877-728-0433 or visit their website:  
[www.pottcounty.org](http://www.pottcounty.org)**

---

The **Disability Awareness Committee** has met several times since the Disability Summit last summer. They have been talking about things that can raise the awareness for the general public. If people are not living with a disability, sometimes they don't understand. The goal of this committee is to let the general public know more about disabilities and make them more aware of things they can do and things they shouldn't do.

This committee has been simple and complex at the same time. Disability Awareness can be as simple as reminding the general public to be respectful. It can also be as complex as traveling overseas to take wheelchairs and other medical equipment and raise awareness in India. The article on page 4 explains a trip to India from the perspective of Kristen Hymer, Independent Living Specialist at Three Rivers Inc.

If you would like to be part of a committee, please email [reception@threeriversinc.org](mailto:reception@threeriversinc.org) or call 1-800-555-3994.

## Committee Updates

On 12-1-08, SRS Secretary Don Jordan instituted an immediate Freeze of Physical Disability Wavier Services. The **Three Rivers' Advocacy Committee** kicked into high gear with a campaign of letter writing, phone calls, e-mails and personal contact with our local area Senators and Representatives bringing to their attention that this Freeze was implemented without notice and without regard to the impact on citizens with disabilities. Local media was informed and many articles were written and media attention was astounding. A web-site was established for the state to document all the State's CILs involvement. The highlight of the campaign was a State wide picket of the local SRS offices. Three River's staff and consumers arrived at the Wamego, Manhattan and Marysville's SRS office in the early morning hours on 1-14-09, braving a cold snap, displaying red Stop signs saying "STOP the FREEZE" and handing out flyers to making the crisis known. The Advocacy continued to monitor the "FREEZE" and Legislators went into session well prepared to do battle for the individuals served on the Physical Disability Wavier. March 1, 2009 Secretary Jordan announced a repeal of the "Freeze" and SRS implemented a rolling waiting list. The Advocacy Committee continues to work with our State office of KACIL and SILCK to be aware of the current budget and legislative issues that impact the people we serve.



## Resources

- [www.threeriversinc.org](http://www.threeriversinc.org) ~ Three Rivers Inc.
- [www.kacil.org](http://www.kacil.org) ~ Kansas Association of Centers for Independent Living
- [www.silck.org](http://www.silck.org) ~ Statewide Independent Living Centers of Kansas
- [www.agingkansas.org](http://www.agingkansas.org) ~ Area Agency on Aging
- [www.srskansas.org](http://www.srskansas.org) ~ Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
- [www.kscoalitionforautism.org](http://www.kscoalitionforautism.org) ~ Kansas Coalition for Autism
- [www.gettinghired.com](http://www.gettinghired.com) ~ Careers & Community of People with Disabilities
- [www.http://www.kansastap.org](http://www.http://www.kansastap.org) ~ Kansas Telecommunication Access Program
- [www.stopthefreeze.com](http://www.stopthefreeze.com) ~ More information about Waivers that the gov't is freezing

**THREE RIVERS INC.  
PO BOX 408  
WAMEGO, KS 66547**

## Access to Independent Living

### **Is your house accessible?**

**Call Three Rivers for more information about ways to make your home or business accessible.**

**Keep a first aid kit in a waterproof box, like a tackle box.**

**Plan ahead for an emergency.**

**Most importantly if you can't take care of yourself in an emergency, ask for help. Your local emergency responders don't know you need help unless you ask.**

*The staff at Three Rivers wants you to be safe!*

- Make sure you are prepared for all emergencies!
- Your lifeline has battery back-up. Don't assume it won't work in a power outage.
  - Make sure your portable oxygen is full.
- Have a landline phone, cordless phones don't work when the power is out.
  - Keep an emergency number of someone with a generator for use in an emergency.
  - Keep a list of back-up Personal Attendants.
- Make sure you have enough food, water, medicine and other necessities to last 2 weeks.